



American Ethnic Practices in the Twenty-first Century: The Milwaukee Study

Jill Florence Lackey

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American Ethnic Practices in the Early Twenty-first Century: The Milwaukee Study is a work based on a twelve-year research project conducted in the greater Milwaukee area by Urban Anthropology Inc. The qualitative study examined the current strength of ethnicity and the contributions that ethnic practices have made to the wider society. Since Barth (1970), social scientists—especially sociocultural anthropologists—have moved toward deconstructing ethnicity by concentrating on the malleability of ethnic identity. This work takes a new approach by focusing on ethnic *practices*. The most prominent findings in *The Milwaukee Study* were the ways that community-building activities of ethnic groups contributed to the wider society; and how this, in turn, can help restore a needed balance between individualism and collectivism in the United States. Since the first edition of *Habits of the Heart* (Bellah et al, 1985), public discourse about ways to restore this balance has been ubiquitous. Most discussions have focused only on strengthening families, faith communities, or neighborhoods, and have ignored the activity and potential of ethnic groups, even though it was during this span of time that interest in multiculturalism in education and politics reached its peak.

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